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ABSTRACT

If inservice education is to strongly affect teacher attitudes, it must be given higher priority and made part of the total package of curriculum improvement in schools. To achieve this higher priority, alternative modes for inservice education must be developed and both universities and school systems must find ways to work cooperatively to make inservice part of the regular school day and program. Such a model was developed cooperatively by John Carroll University and the Cleveland Heights-University Heights school district for the purpose of retraining veteran teachers to move from traditional elementary classrooms to new open space elementary schools. The first phase of this project consisted of a needs assessment conducted by the University. This was carried out for each teacher by University consultants, and the final contract, objectives, and schedule were negotiated. Based on this, the second phase consisted of three training days where teachers were released all day to work with consultants on interpersonal relations skills and classroom environment analysis and diagnosis. In the third phase clusters of three to four teachers met for an intensive planning day. Phase four was designated as the simulation experience where teachers and students tried out new environment and teaching learning styles in a simulated setting. Phase five consisted of a day away from the school on the University Campus where teachers and consultants formally evaluated the positive and negative aspects of simulation experience and set future goals. Phase six involved implementation of the program in the new setting based on work done in phase five. (JMF)

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The University Goes To School

An In-Service Training Design

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Given the condition of a surplus of teachers, teacher education literature and programs are all reflecting interest in teacher renewal. Universities are becoming involved at the system level and are virtually going to schools. Traditionally in-service education has taken the format of graduate education, limited interest after-school programs, or summer workshops. Often these prove to be ineffective in achieving any long-term change goals for school systems or individuals. Thus in-service education has not received the proper emphasis it should and has not significantly influenced the quality of education in schools. As Roy Edelfelt of the NEA states, "In-service education is the neglected segment of teacher education."[1]

If in-service education is to strongly affect teacher attitudes it must be given higher priority and made part of the total package of curriculum improvement in schools, not relegated to the status of an extra tacked-on activity. To achieve this higher priority, alternative modes for in-service education must be developed and both universities and school systems must find ways to work cooperatively to make in-service part of the regular school day and program. Such a model was developed cooperatively by John Carroll University and the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District for the purpose of retraining veteran teachers to move from traditional elementary classrooms to new open space elementary schools.[2] In effect the University went to school.

Focus is on change as the University moves into a new format for in-service education. All training occurs during school hours on site with University and public school faculty released for the task. In-service is seen as a top priority item allowing for an alternative mode of training to be initiated. Emphasis is directed at achieving both individual teacher growth and system change. Thus teachers are given needed support to achieve common goals and make them operational within the classroom, school and system.

The details of such a cooperative program which was initiated in September 1974 follow.

Assumptions Underlying the Training Design

1. The University faculty is involved on a full-time basis, not just on a consultation basis where the main interest is at the University, not the school.

2. It is very important to model in the training the kind of behavior that would be expected of the teachers in the new environment. Thus the University sends a team to work with the teachers rather than one individual faculty member. This is done in order to effectively model cooperative teaching.

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3. The teacher learners are exposed to learning styles and teaching styles appropriate to their new environment. Included among these are those of facilitator, helper, conflict manager, resource person, active experimenter, and reflective observer. Both individual, small and large groups work is included.

4. It is very important to the success of the project to build a high trust level with the teachers and to work with them on the basis of what they believe to be important in order to set and accomplish their own goals, congruent with those of the system. They need to be in control of what is happening with and to them and to take responsibility for it.

5. The University faculty note the importance of developing a psychologically safe climate where trust, mutual respect and cooperation exist. They are not perceived as experts, but as one of the many resources available in the school setting, the teachers being another important resource to one another. This is communicated early to the teachers, some of whom see the professors in an authority, rather than a facilitator role. It is necessary to recognize and utilize the strengths of all the participants and for them to take responsibility for their own learning.

6. Participation needs to be meaningful for all involved, a feeling of practical accomplishment, not just a mechanical act. People need to interact in a social as well as a technical context.

7. Expectations make a difference in the final result. If negative expectations or resistance to change surfaces, is dealt with and resolved, then problems can be identified and expectations can become positive, assuring more success.

8. It is important to encourage openness, sharing and candor among the group and to build relationships during the training that would sustain in the new environment.

Description of Training Design

The in-service project to prepare veteran teachers to work in a new, open architecture setting began when the superintendent asked the University to develop a training program for teachers in informal education. He had previously obtained a grant from the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation to cover the costs of a full-time university faculty member for a full public school semester and for five days of substitute time to release each teacher from regular classroom duties. The first phase of the project consisted of a needs assessment conducted by the University team. This individual needs assessment was carried out with each teacher by the University consultants. At that time meetings were also held with the principal, and with the faculty as a whole. Here a final contract, objectives and schedule were negotiated that provided the basis for the training.

Based upon the work done in the spring, planning for the training which began in September 1974 occurred in the summer. The second phase consisted of three training days where teachers were released all day by substitutes to work with the consultants. Training covered such areas as interpersonal relations skills, classroom environment analysis and diagnosis, visits and evaluations of open schools, formulation of generalizations about informal education, and exposure to resources available on informal education. The generalizations formed and later reevaluated were considered to be a very important part of the process the teachers experienced since these were to become the future underlying tenets.

The third phase of the training consisted of a planning day where clusters of three and four teachers, who had previously been designated by the principal, met for an intensive planning day. Here plans were made for the simulation experience based upon the individual needs and interests of the teachers and students. Room arrangements, schedules, and learning activities were planned. Each cluster agreed to try out some new cooperative learning experience which the new environment allowed. It was stressed that the simulation experience was to be a high-risk, testing-out, non-judgmental environment.

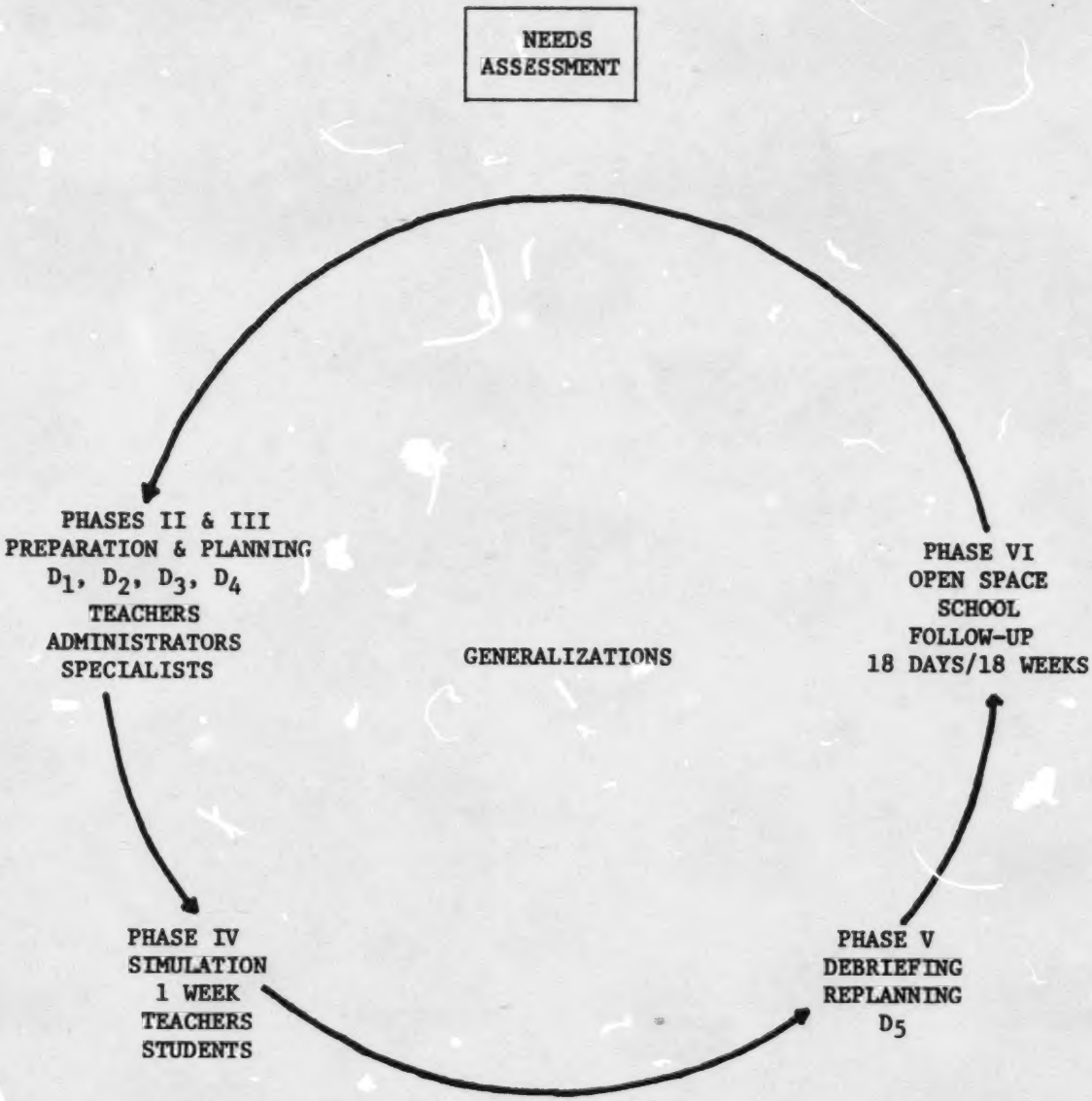
Phase four was designated as the simulation experience. Using simulation in its broadest terms, this meant that teachers and students tried out the new environment and teaching-learning styles in a simulated setting. Conditions such as open space, new furniture already purchased for the new school, new materials and the larger numbers of people were all set up to give the participants a feeling for the conditions in the new setting. This experience lasted for one week when each cluster of teachers and their students moved into simulation in a large, all-purpose room to try out the previous plans. Six clusters completed the simulation experience. Each simulation took on its own characteristics and reflected the thinking, planning, and needs of the participants, both teachers and students.

Following the simulation each cluster met for phase five which consisted of a day away from school on the University campus. Here the teachers and the consultants debriefed the experience, formally evaluated the positive and negative aspects, and set goals for what they wanted to accomplish in the new school. They also made suggestions for use of 18 days of consultant follow-up time during the next school year in the new building. Based upon a request of the teachers, the consultants developed a sociogram which was used with the teachers, on a voluntary basis, to ascertain their choices about clusters for the new building. These recommendations were given to the principal who made the final decision on how the teachers were grouped. During this time orientation was also done with parents on formal and informal levels.

Phase six will occur in the new building and will be planned and carried out based upon the work done in phase five. Use of consultant time in the new building was planned in cooperation with the teachers and the principal. The consultants will be available for 18 days during the first school year that the new building is open. They will help with scheduling and planning, observation and feedback, conferencing with teachers and parents, helping teachers set up learning centers, and mainly institutionalizing a support system.

TEACHER RENEWAL FOR INFORMAL EDUCATION: A TRAINING MODEL

PHASE I



Impressions

The University consultants have observed a great deal of growth, both cognitive and affective on the part of the teachers as learners. There were periods of awareness during information gathering and experiencing the new environment. There was much done in alteration of the space, an enormous amount of energy expended in planning and evaluating, and evidence of changing relationships with children and teachers. It was important to provide support for these activities and to provide it at the teachers' level, using their strengths in a non-judgmental environment.

As of this time, based upon informal written evaluation, a teacher survey and discussion done individually with each cluster, it appears that teacher attitudes about the training and new school have changed from ones of doubt, anxiety and low expectation to ones that are positive about the new environment. Hindering factors mainly focus on the noise because of the poor acoustics in the simulation room. Teachers cite such positive factors as a sense of community; opportunity to work cooperatively with others; opportunity to share responsibilities, students and ideas; flexibility; time to plan cooperatively; and needed support. A sense of someone caring about them and the school was communicated.

Students have been informally interviewed and taped and have indicated overall general positive attitudes. They, too, have noted the noise as a hindering factor. They also noted the feeling of community, opportunities to help other children, and the new environment as positive factors.

Conclusion

The model developed here as an alternative to the traditional methods of in-service training can be used in other ways. Although it was developed with the specific purpose of training teachers for an informal, open space school, other types of training purposes formulated through a needs assessment could be easily substituted using the same training format and basic assumptions about training. The important consideration is that in-service can be considered as a high priority item wherein the resources of school systems and universities are used cooperatively with mutual respect resulting in mutual benefit. Universities can and should go to schools.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Roy A. Edelfelt, "In-service Teacher Education: New Priority for ATE," ATE Newsletter III (Jan. 1975): 5.

[2]Special recognition should be given to Belva Singer, Director of Education, Cleveland Heights-University Heights Schools, for her tireless efforts and creativity in initiating the "Simulation" idea, to the teachers and administrators whose cooperation was outstanding, and to the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation for financial support.